

# Houston County Remembers Deputies Lost In The Line Of Duty

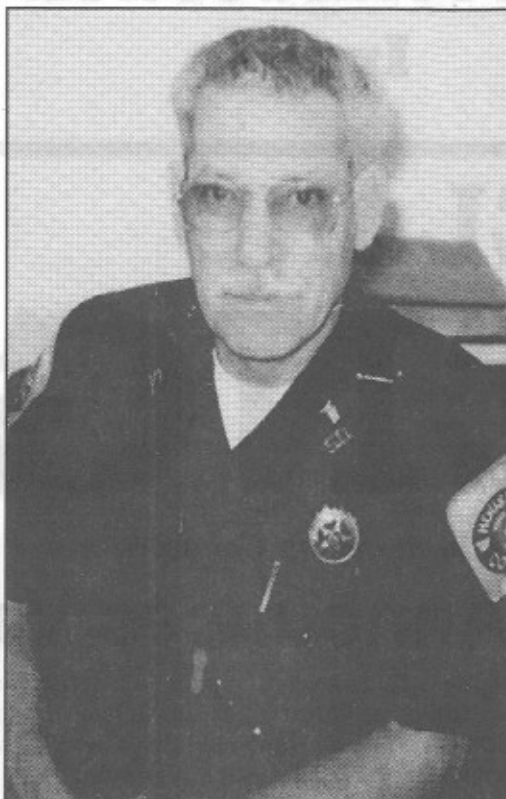
May 13 to 19, 2007 was the week set aside for National Police Week, with May 15 being National Peace Officers' Memorial Day. National Police Week was signed by President John F. Kennedy on October 1, 1962. However, it wasn't until May 15, 1982 that the first National Peace Officers' Memorial Service was held. This is a time set aside each year to reflect on fallen officers.

Houston County has lost two deputies in the line of duty. The first was Jesse English who died on May 28, 1923. It was on a Sunday evening when Houston County Sheriff Deputy Jesse English, Sheriff O.B. Hale and Deputy City Marshal W.A. Hooper went to Grapeland, Texas to try and intercept escaped convicts from the State Prison near Weldon.

All three peace officers were hidden in weeds along the sides of the railroad embankment. Deputy English was the first to see two men walking down the tracks at approximately 11 p.m. Sheriff Hale and Marshal Hooper heard Deputy English call out three times, "Put up your hands!" As they climbed to the top of the embankment they witnessed Deputy English shot in the head by a man who fired a shotgun without raising it to his shoulder.

Sheriff Hale and Marshal Hooper opened fire on the two men. One man fell to the ground and another ran away. The man who fell down was not injured but the one with the shotgun had gotten away. As they turned their attention to Deputy English, they found him to be severely wounded and unconscious. Medical doctors were summoned but Deputy English passed away in the early morning hours in Palestine, Texas.

Both men were trustees at the Texas State Prison and had escaped on May 24, 1923. The captured man was R.L. Clark,



Houston Co. Deputy Bobby Franks



Houston Co. Deputy Jesse English

who had been serving a sentence for burglary. The one who killed Deputy English was Tom Davis, who was serving a 10-year sentence for Murder out of Newton County.

There were conflicting reports in different papers regarding the arrest of Davis. One says that Davis was captured on May 29, 1923 in the early morning hours at Anderson Crossing. He was caught as he walked into a farmhouse, asking for food. The resident, who had been forewarned to be on the lookout for Davis, held him at gun point until Sheriff Posses from Houston and Cherokee counties arrived to take him into custody. Another article

said that Davis was tracked by the dogs from the Eastham and Ferguson Units to the Neches river bottom and captured as he stood beside a tree. He offered no resistance and was taken into custody. Davis received a 99-year sentence for killing Deputy English.

At the time of death, Deputy English was married and had three children. He is buried in the English Cemetery 11 miles east of Crockett.

Most of this information was collected and given to the Sheriff's Office last year after research was done by Terry Baker, a retired Assistant Chief Deputy from Dallas County. Mr. Baker has taken on a

project called "Finding the Forgotten." He spends his time researching fallen officers and has added many names to the state and national memorials.

The second deputy killed in the line of duty was Deputy Bobby Franks. On December 22, 2002, a rainy Monday morning, around 10:35 a.m., Deputy Franks was directing traffic on Hwy 287 south, about a mile outside of Loop 304. A vehicle was stuck in the mud and Deputy Franks and Deputy Robert Moffett were trying to avert the traffic until the vehicle could free. An oncoming pickup truck was heading North on Hwy 287 when the driver saw the flashing lights and tried to slow down. Due to the weather condition, the truck began to slide and ended up being steered into the ditch toward the stuck vehicle. At the same time, Deputy Franks was trying to escape being hit and ran in the same direction being hit by the pickup, which then slid into the stuck vehicle.

Sheriff Bobbitt stated that it is hard to believe it is going on five years since the accident happened. He remembers the day sadly, stating that the Sheriff's Office Christmas lunch and get-together had been planned for noon that day. Sheriff Bobbitt said, "Deputy Franks is still missed by all of us. It is never easy to lose a co-worker, much less one who is a friend. Not only are Deputy Franks' family and friends affected, but it was also a tragedy for the person who was driving the truck. His life has been changed forever, too." Deputy Franks had been in law enforcement for 17 years and had served as Chief Deputy under Sheriff Jimbo Rains.

Both Deputy English and Deputy Franks names are inscribed on the Lost Lawman Memorial in Austin, Texas and the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington, D.C.